

**REMARKS**

Claims 1 through 15 were presented for examination in the present application. The instant amendment cancels claim 4 without prejudice. Claims 7, 11, and 14 have been withdrawn, but remain pending for rejoinder upon the allowance of generic claim 1. Thus, claims 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 12, 13, and 15 are presented for examination upon entry of the instant amendment.

Claims 1, 12-13, and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 over U.S. Patent No. 5,677,331 to Aruga et al. (Aruga). Claims 2-4 and 6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 over Aruga in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,994,251 to Niwa (Niwa) and U.S. Publication No. 2000/0185487 to Divakar et al. (Divakar). Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 over Aruga and Niwa in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,044,311 to Mase et al. (Mase).

Independent claim 1 has been amended to include elements of claims 2 and 4. As such, independent claim 1 now recites, in part a seal ring having inner and outer circumferential parts in contact with the first and second seal surfaces so that “an unattached zone is defined between the inner and outer circumferential parts (emphasis added)”. Support for this amendment can be found at least in Figure 4.

Niwa discloses a seal ring 70 at least in FIG. 1C. However, the seal ring of Niwa clearly has a square sectional shape. Thus, the seal ring of Niwa clearly does not disclose or suggest seal ring having an unattached zone as recited by claim 1.

The Office Action acknowledges with respect to claims 2 and 4 that Aruga fails to disclose or suggest a seal ring. See Office Action page 3, lines 20-23.

Further, the Office Action fails to assert that either Mase or Divakar disclose or suggest a seal ring. Rather, Mase is merely asserted by the Office Action as disclosing an alumina screw, while Divakar is merely asserted by the Office Action as disclosing the use of alumina for its low thermal conductivity.

Accordingly, Aruga, Mase or Divakar do not disclose a seal ring at all and the seal ring of Niwa has a square cross section. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that the cited art does not disclose or suggest the seal ring having an unattached zone as recited by claim 1.

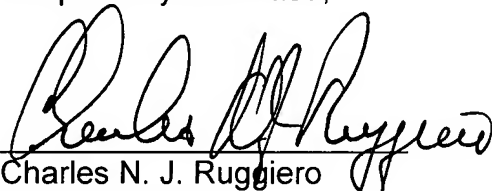
Claim 1 is believed to be in condition for allowance. Claims 2, 3, 6, 8, 12, 13, and 15 are also believed to be in condition for allowance for at least the reason that they depend from the aforementioned claim 1. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections to claims 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 12, 13, and 15 are respectfully requested.

In addition, Applicants respectfully request rejoinder of withdrawn claims 7, 11, and 14, which are also believed to be in condition for allowance for at least the reason that they depend from the aforementioned claim 1.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. If for any reason the Examiner feels that consultation with Applicants' attorney would be helpful in the advancement of the prosecution, the Examiner is invited to call the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,

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